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ABSTRACT

U.S. military service academies hope to develop high standards of moral value among cadets. Tests of "values" are difficult to construct and utilize properly. This paper discusses the strengths and limitations of the Rokeach Value Scales, which have been widely used to measure civilian adult and student values in the U.S., Australia, and elsewhere. Data come from a longitudinal study of 68 West Point cadets who were tested at entrance, after two months of initial summer training, after two years and at graduation. The results showed that cadets enter with values which are different from students entering civilian colleges, and that over time, cadet value priorities become more similar to officer values and less similar to those of civilian groups. Although the Rokeach Value Scales may not provide sufficient detail for some formative evaluations, they appear to be valid in measuring the unique qualities of the military ethos. (Author)

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EVALUATING MORAL VALUE DEVELOPMENT AMONG U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY CADETS

By Robert Priest and Claude Bridges[a]

ABSTRACT

U.S. military service academies hope to develop high standards of moral value among cadets. Tests of "values" are difficult to construct and utilize properly. This paper discusses the strengths and limitations of the Rokeach Value Scales, which have been widely used to measure civilian adult and student values in the U.S., Australia, and elsewhere. Data come from a longitudinal study of 68 West Point cadets who were tested at entrance, after two months of initial summer training, after two years and at graduation. The results showed that cadets enter with values which are different from students entering civilian colleges, and that over time, cadet value priorities become more similar to officer values and less similar to those of civilian groups. Although the Rokeach Value Scales may not provide sufficient detail for some formative evaluations, they appear to be valid in measuring the unique qualities of the military ethos.

[a]The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not purport to reflect the positions of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense. Paper presented at the 26th Annual Conference of the Military Testing Association, Munich Germany, 7 November 1984.

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Evaluating Moral Value Development Among
U.S. Military Academy Cadets

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The military services have long had a concern for developing high ethical standards among their personnel (Stromberg, Wakin, Callahan, 1982). In recent years, the United States Service Academies have developed formal programs of ethics instruction which go beyond the simple precepts of an honor code to address such issues as obedience, duty and the morality of war. At the United States Military Academy (USMA) there are a number of programs and systems which attempt to develop the cadet as an ethical professional.

B. In order to assess the impact of USMA's programs on value development among cadets, there is a need for some objective measures of cadet values and how they change over time. The current study was initiated to evaluate cadet development on a number of moral, social and personal values, using instruments which were widely used in studies of U.S. college students. Designing an assessment program for a four year study of the same cadets was a challenging task, since the exact specifications of the USMA ethics and professional curriculum were not worked out at the time the research was initiated. This paper will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of one particular instrument, the Rokeach value survey RVS).

C. Rokeach (1973) defines a value as a relatively enduring set of beliefs about a mode of conduct as an end-state of existence. The survey has been carefully developed, is highly regarded (Robinson and Shaver, 1969; Spates, 1983), and has been used extensively in studies of the values of both students and adults in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Israel, as well as other countries (Rokeach, 1979; Feather, 1975). Furthermore, there is

a fairly extensive literature on the experimental process of how to change values, which focuses on the RVS. Thus, it provides an extensive set of normative data from other groups for purposes of comparison. Most importantly, the RVS includes values relevant to USMA concerns for moral integrity.

D. Rokeach developed two lists of values: one list representing end-states of existance that people strive for such as "a comfortable life, wisdom," which are called terminal values. A second list represents personal or moral qualities that people strive for but are not ends-in-themselves (e.g., ambitious, broadminded etc), which are called instrumental values. Each list of values, instrumental and terminal, consist of 18 brief phrases. Individuals are required to read through all 18 items on each list, then to rank order from 1 (most important) to 18 (least important). Both rankings are to be done in terms of relative importance of each item "as a guiding principle of life."

II. METHOD

A. The RVS was given to all entering cadets in the Class of 1981 on the day they entered in July 1977 (N=1366). It was given to all cadets who remained after the initial two months of summer training in August 1977 (N=1219), and to a large majority of those who remained after two additional years in August 1979 (N=707). Each of these administrations was done in a group setting. The remaining test was conducted by means of mail survey, which yielded a 52% response rate. Half of this group was given the RVS under conditions of anonymity, the other half were required to give their names. Fortunately, there were only small differences in scores between the anonymous and non-anonymous group. There were 98 cadets in the nonanonymous group who completed the RVS in late April 1981. Of these, 68 had completed the scales all four times.

B. The RVS also had been given to a cross section of cadets and officers in 1971 (Bridges, 1973). We were interested in comparing data from the current sample with published data from the 1971 West Point samples and also with data from Rokeach's published data from nationally representative samples of U.S. citizens (Feather, 1975). Means or medians from these sources were put into a 36x8 table with rows representing the Rokeach values and columns representing the different samples. We then computed tau correlations among columns to produce measures of value system similarity among groups.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Tables 1 and 2 show the mean value scores for all four test administrations for the longitudinal group. A repeated-measures analysis of variance F-test shows that there were a number of statistically significant changes in value priority over the four years. Five of the changes are considered moderate in magnitude of change on the basis of the F statistic (>9.00). To save space only those changes which were both statistically significant and moderate in magnitude will be discussed here. A more extensive discussion is available elsewhere (Bridges and Priest, 1983).

1. At entrance, cadets ranked "equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)" at a moderate level, 10.6. The importance of equality continued to decline throughout the four years at the Military Academy. In the earlier study of USMA officers, Bridges had found equality was given a medium rank of 11.6 (1972, p5). The results may reflect a belief among cadets that equality of opportunity is no longer an important social problem in U.S. society, or it may reflect belief that equality is less of an issue in the Army and at USMA.

2. At entrance cadets ranked "national security (protection from attack)" 8.3 in importance. After two years it had declined to 11.4 in importance. USMA officers had ranked it 10.8 (Bridges, 1972, p5). Cadets changed in the direction of officer values. There is a tendency in Rokeach's data (1973) for better educated groups of civilian adults to value national security less highly. Civilian groups tend to give a higher priority to "national security" than do military groups, which is inconsistent with Huntington's (1957) claim that officers are as interested as civilians in this issue.

3. At entrance cadets ranked "ambitious (hard working, aspiring)" 6.8, but by graduation, 9.8. Perhaps the realities of competition with other cadets explain the shift. USMA officers had ranked it 9.3.

4. At entrance cadets ranked "obedient (dutiful, respectful") 10.3, whereas at graduation they ranked it 13.2. Officers had ranked it 13.8. The change in cadet valuation of obedience is consistent with a broader concept of duty that requires less supervision in the upperclass years, as well as with officer values.

5. At entrance cadets ranked "independent (self-respect, self-sufficient)" 11.9, but by graduation four years later 7.9. In contrast to other values, independence becomes increasingly important with time. Officers had ranked it 8.3. National samples show that more educated groups value independence more highly. So cadet developmental changes are consistent with values of officers and with the values of adult groups with college degrees.

B. Table 3 shows correlations among the value systems of cadets at various points in time and the value systems of other groups. Data for this analysis come from the entire set of cadets tested, not just the longitudinal sample. The trend of the correlations over time is worth noting: the older the Class

of 1981 became, the more its value profile resembles the value profiles of the two officer groups, and the less it resembled the value profile of two representative samples of U.S. male adults. In part, this is because the average male adult in the U.S. does not have a four year college education.

C. Thus, the RVS is able to show how cadets in the U.S. Military Academy developed values over time, and how their values come to resemble the distinct values system of military officers. The RVS is appealing because it is brief and can easily be incorporated into a research program. Nevertheless, it is not an "all purpose hammer" - to paraphrase Rokeach (1973, p51). For some purposes, the scales are too short to provide an in-depth review of the problems and needs of military trainees. We can perhaps illustrate this by pointing out that nearly all groups tested on the RVS tend to rank "honest" as number one in importance among the terminal values. Although such data are favorable, they are not very useful for program managers who need to know both the strengths and the weaknessess of an operational program. More extensive and detailed value assessment instruments are required, for example, to evaluate an in-house program of ethics and professionalism training. Other research describes some instruments which have been developed at USMA for such purposes (Priest, 1982; Priest, Fullerton and Bridges, 1982).

D. To our knowledge, value scales like this have not been used in personnel selection. The RVS do correlate with attrition from the Academy (Bridges and Priest, 1983) but their validities are not high enough to warrant use in an operational selection program.

E. Values are fundamental in any rational model of decision making. They are necessarily more abstract and generalized than other psychological constructs such as knowledge or skills. Cadets consistently ranked "responsible" as an

extremely important instrumental value (second only to "honest"), as one would expect of a military officer. To understand how cadets translate their value, for "responsibility" into action in the concrete circumstances of a new situation, one must examine skills for oral communication, decisiveness, delegation and planning. The latter may require an assessment center (Butler, Wilson, Priest, 1984).

F. Other sets of value scales may also be worth considering. Nevertheless, the RVS is clearly applicable to describing the uniqueness of the military ethos. It would add considerably to our understanding of the military in society if comparable studies of cadets and officers in other western democracies were conducted.

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TABLE 1

ROKEACH MEAN VALUE SCORES FROM
LONGITUDINAL GROUP
(TERMINAL VALUES)

	MEANS				
	1	2	3	4	F
1. A comfortable life	13.00	11.28	10.60	10.54	7.39*
2. An exciting life	10.01	10.40	9.75	9.29	1.28
3. A sense of accomplishment	6.51	8.09	7.85	7.57	2.84*
4. A world at peace	8.93	9.49	9.81	10.79	2.91*
5. A world of beauty	14.49	14.96	14.19	14.24	1.20
6. Equality	10.56	11.59	12.18	13.19	9.34*
7. Family security	8.00	7.03	7.68	7.63	.93
8. Freedom	6.28	5.74	5.88	5.74	.45
9. Happiness	7.81	7.76	6.38	6.72	3.35*
10. Inner harmony	9.13	9.91	9.79	8.79	1.28
11. Mature love	9.51	8.25	7.06	6.60	7.69*
12. National security	8.34	9.74	11.43	11.43	17.34*
13. Pleasure	14.28	14.09	11.99	13.22	8.09*
14. Salvation	11.28	9.15	10.00	10.24	4.55*
15. Self-respect	5.94	6.85	6.36	6.78	1.35
16. Social recognition	12.84	13.26	13.85	12.69	1.59
17. True friendship	7.22	6.71	7.06	7.09	.33
18. Wisdom	6.87	6.72	8.85	8.44	5.85*

Key

1 = at entrance, 1977
2 = after Cadet Basic Training, 1977
3 = August 1979
4 = Spring 1981

Note: The lower the numbered rank, the higher the importance of that value.

P <.05 N=68

TABLE 2

ROKEACH MEAN VALUE SCORE FROM
LONGITUDINAL GROUP
(INSTRUMENTAL VALUES)

	MEAN RANK				
	1	2	3	4	F
1. Ambitious	6.76	6.83	8.59	9.80	9.92*
2. Broadminded	9.64	9.56	8.29	9.53	2.20
3. Capable	8.62	9.32	7.38	8.42	3.60*
4. Cheerful	12.48	12.68	11.74	10.83	3.70*
5. Clean	12.17	11.86	13.68	14.24	8.24*
6. Courageous	8.09	8.92	8.24	7.42	1.99
7. Forgiving	11.30	12.21	11.30	9.77	5.91*
8. Helpful	9.65	9.44	9.97	9.61	.26
9. Honest	3.45	3.76	3.32	3.24	.49
10. Imaginative	13.68	13.73	12.50	11.77	5.59*
11. Independent	11.92	10.77	9.38	7.98	11.86*
12. Intellectual	11.39	10.15	11.70	11.74	2.38
13. Logical	9.94	10.68	9.14	9.73	1.56
14. Loving	10.39	9.00	9.14	7.97	3.42*
15. Obedient	10.26	11.15	12.97	13.21	12.86*
16. Polite	10.85	11.56	12.24	13.00	4.88*
17. Responsible	4.12	4.17	4.95	4.82	1.62
18. Self-controlled	6.27	5.20	6.56	7.89	6.00*

Key

1 = at entrance, 1977; 2 = after Cadet Basic Training, 1977,

3 = August 1979; 4 = Spring 1981

Note: Lower scores indicate higher importance.

TABLE 3

TAU CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VALUE PROFILES OF CADETS AND OTHER GROUPS

		Class of 1981 Tested At			
Other Group	Tested In	Entrance	Reorganization Week 1977	Reorganization Week 1979	Spring 1981
West Point[a] Officers	1971	.56*	.53*	.67*	66*
Command & Staff College[a] Officers	1977-1978	.55*	.52*	.71*	71*
U.S. Males[b]	1968	.48*	.46*	.42*	.38*
U.S. Males[b]	1971	.51*	.50*	.47*	.40*

* p <001

[a] Source: Memo for record, Survey of Values held by Command and General Staff College Students, 1978: MAOR 244.

[b] Source: Rokeach, cited in Feather, 1975, p 208-209.